BOOK FOUR

"SHE WHO SLAYS"

D.G. CHICHESTER
writer

SCOTT McDANIEL
penciler

HECTOR COLLAZO
inker

CHRISTIE SCHEELE
colorist

HEROIC AGE
separator

BILL OAKLEY
letterer

DAWN GEIGER
designer

MATT IDELSON
assistant editor

RALPH MACCHIO
editor

MARK GRUENWALD
editor in chief

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ELEKTRA®

ROOT OF EVIL

CHICHESTER • McDANIEL

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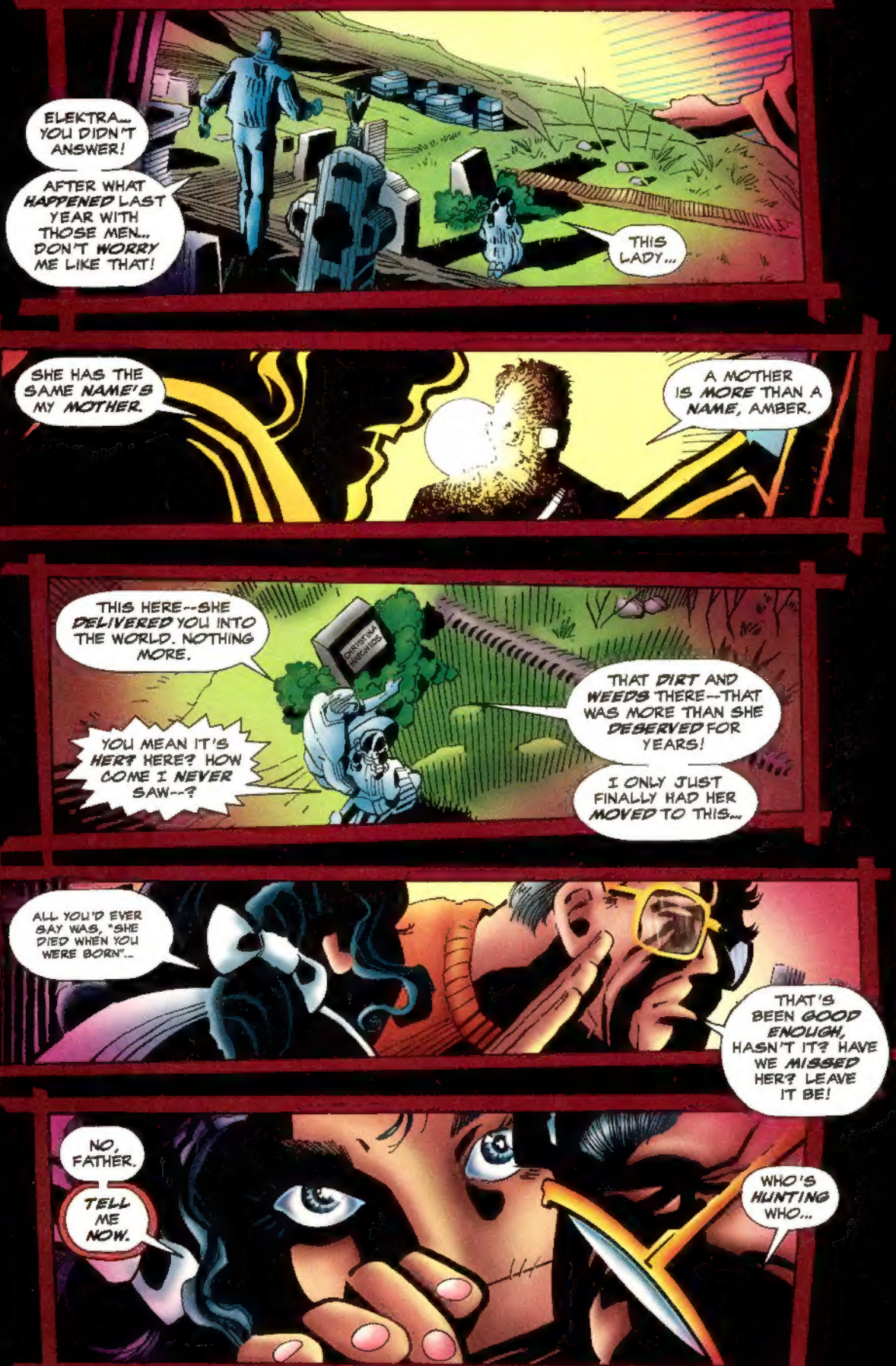
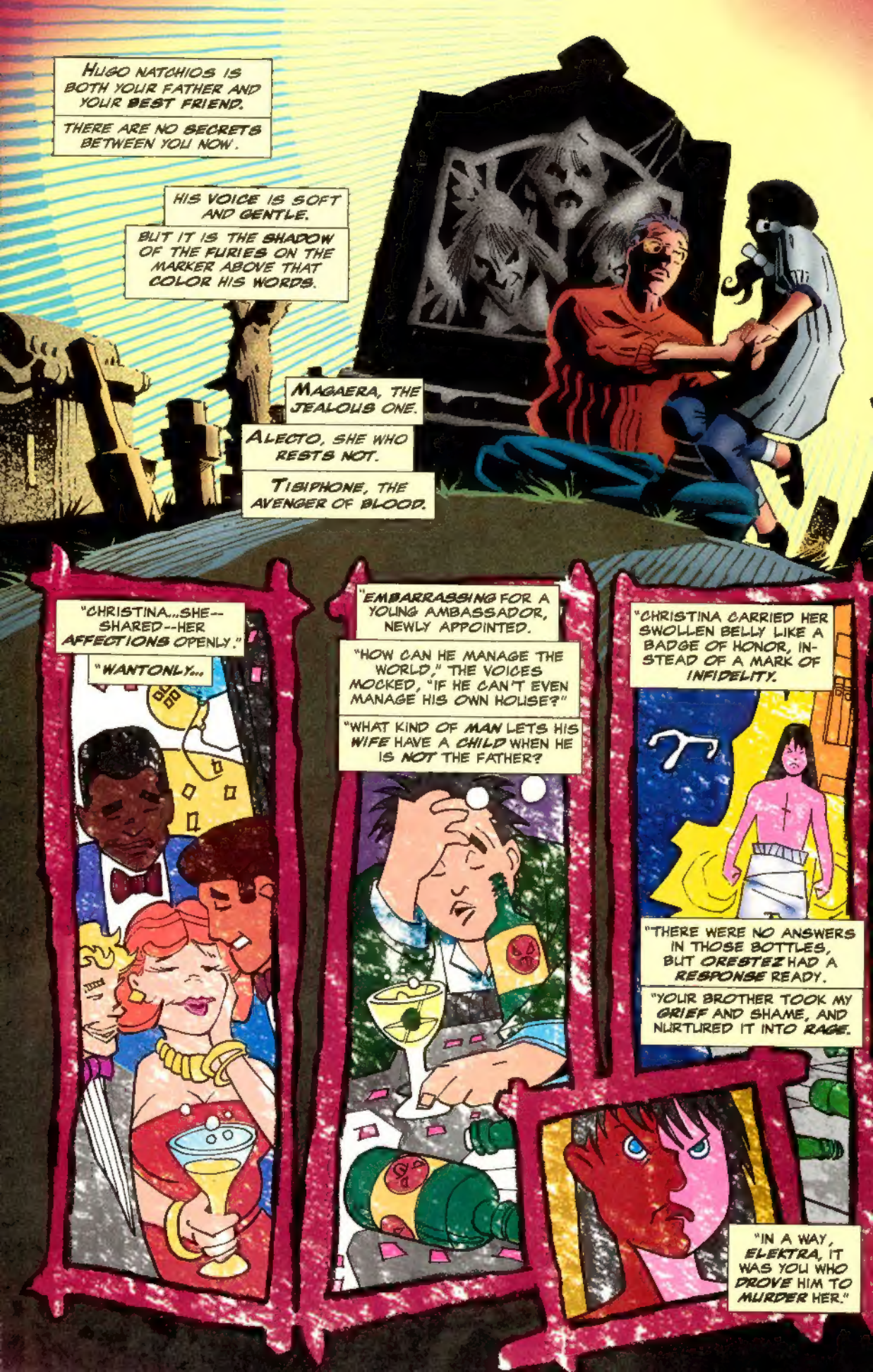
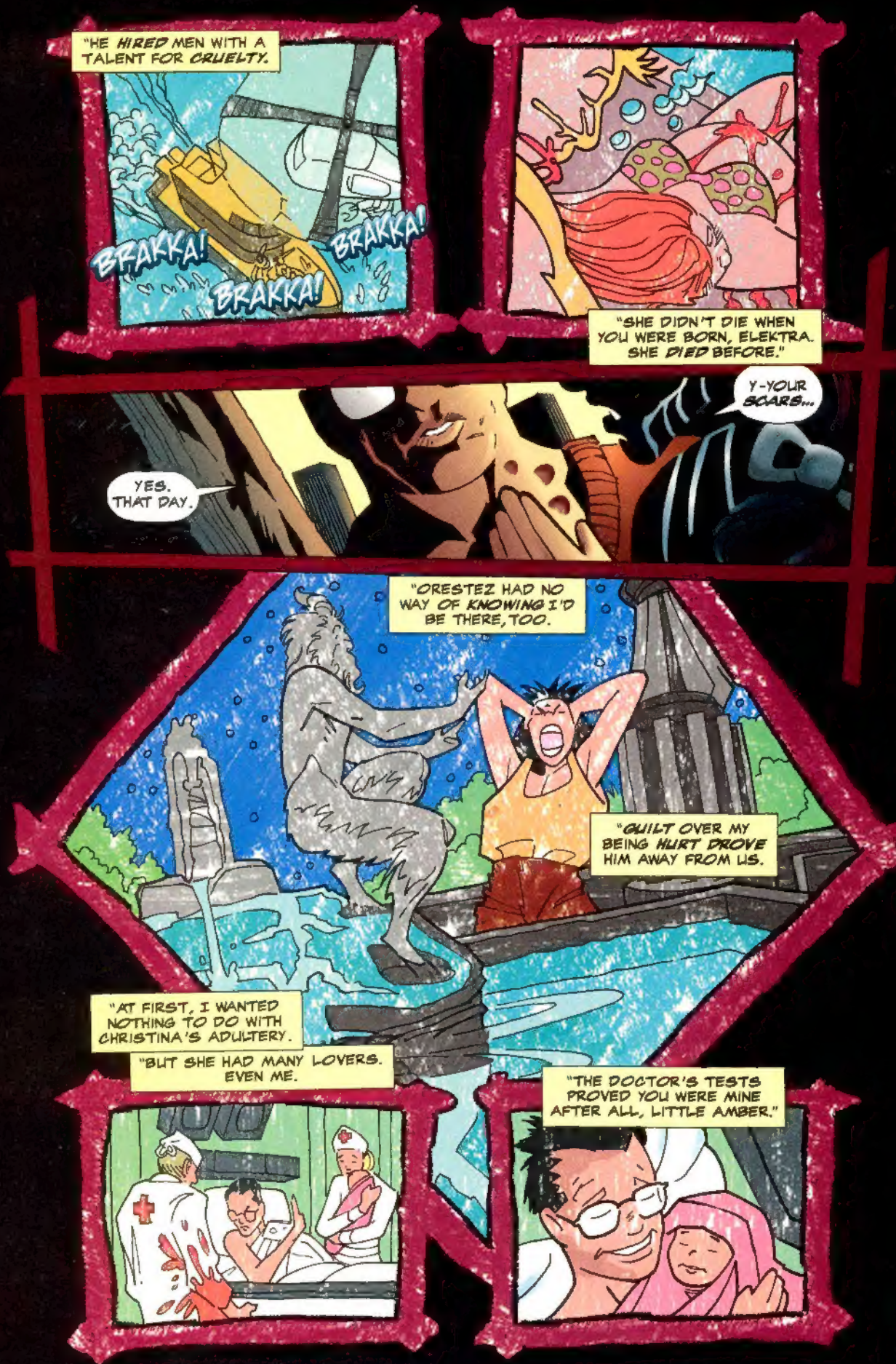
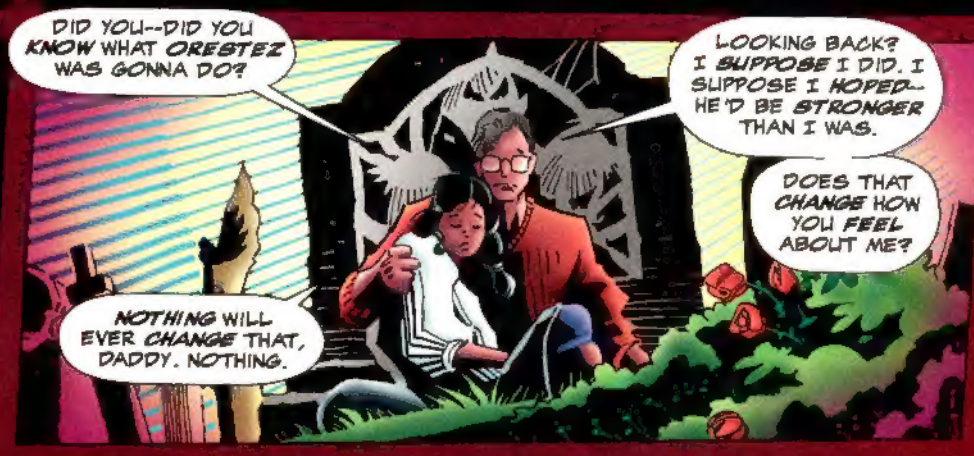
"None of us ever sees her in the dark, or understands her cruel mysteries."
-Euripides
JUST OUTSIDE OF ATHENS, JUST PAST YOUR TENTH BIRTHDAY.
YOU NEVER FEEL SO ALIVE AS WHEN YOU'RE AT PLAY AMONG THE DEAD.
CATCH-ME-CATCH-ME-CATCH-ME-IF-YOU-CAN!
WAIT UP, ELEKTRA--YOUR OLD MAN'S NOT SO YOUNG ANY MORE!
YOU WANT ME TO JOIN THIS COLLECTION?
YOU'RE SO SILLY FATHER--YOU'RE GONNA BE WITH ME FOREVER!
GOT YOU NOW--!
NO?
WHO'S HUNTING WHO TODAY, LITTLE AMBER?
ELEKTRA? ELEKTRA!

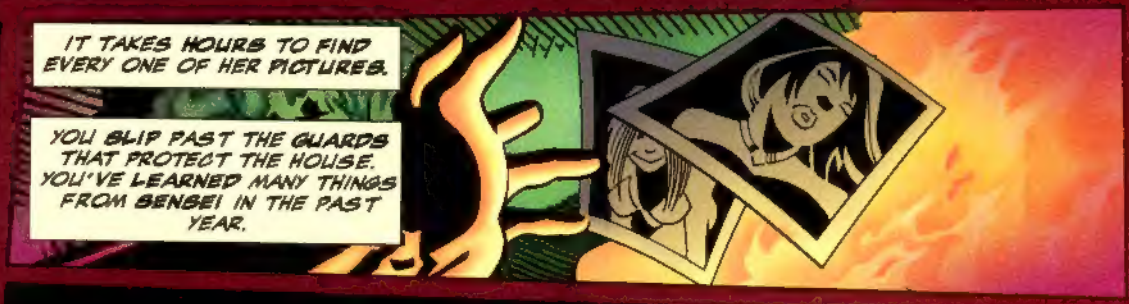

ELEKTRA... YOU DIDN'T ANSWER!
AFTER WHAT HAPPENED LAST YEAR WITH THOSE MEN.. DON'T WORRY ME LIKE THAT!
THIS LADY...
SHE HAS THE SAME NAME'S MY MOTHER.
A MOTHER IS MORE THAN A NAME, AMBER.
THIS HERE--SHE DELIVERED YOU INTO THE WORLD. NOTHING MORE.
YOU MEAN IT'S HER? HERE? HOW COME I NEVER SAW--?
THAT DIRT AND WEEDS THERE--THAT WAS MORE THAN SHE DESERVED FOR YEARS!
I ONLY JUST FINALLY HAD HER MOVED TO THIS...
ALL YOU'D EVER SAY WAS, "SHE DIED WHEN YOU WERE BORN"..
THAT'S BEEN GOOD ENOUGH, HASN'T IT? HAVE WE MISSED HER? LEAVE IT BE!
NO, FATHER.
TELL ME NOW.
WHO'S HUNTING WHO...


HUGO NATCHIOS IS BOTH YOUR FATHER AND YOUR BEST FRIEND.
THERE ARE NO SECRETS BETWEEN YOU NOW.
HIS VOICE IS SOFT AND GENTLE.
BUT IT IS THE SHADOW OF THE FURIES ON THE MARKER ABOVE THAT COLOR HIS WORDS.
MAGAERA, THE JEALOUS ONE.
ALECTO, SHE WHO RESTS NOT.
TISIPHONE, THE AVENGER OF BLOOD.
"CHRISTINA...SHE--SHARED--HER AFFECTIONS OPENLY."
"WANTONLY..."
"EMBARRASSING FOR A YOUNG AMBASSADOR, NEWLY APPOINTED.
"HOW CAN HE MANAGE THE WORLD," THE VOICES MOCKED, "IF HE CAN'T EVEN MANAGE HIS OWN HOUSE?"
"WHAT KIND OF MAN LETS HIS WIFE HAVE A CHILD WHEN HE IS NOT THE FATHER?
"CHRISTINA CARRIED HER SWOLLEN BELLY LIKE A BADGE OF HONOR, INSTEAD OF A MARK OF INFIDELITY.
"THERE WERE NO ANSWERS IN THOSE BOTTLES, BUT ORESTEZ HAD A RESPONSE READY.
"YOUR BROTHER TOOK MY GRIEF AND SHAME, AND NURTURED IT INTO RAGE.
"IN A WAY, ELEKTRA, IT WAS YOU WHO DROVE HIM TO MURDER HER."


"HE HIRED MEN WITH A TALENT FOR CRUELTY.
BRAKKA!
BRAKKA!
BRAKKA!
"SHE DIDN'T DIE WHEN YOU WERE BORN, ELEKTRA. SHE DIED BEFORE."
Y-YOUR SCARS...
YES. THAT DAY.
"ORESTEZ HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING I'D BE THERE, TOO.
"GUILT OVER MY BEING HURT DROVE HIM AWAY FROM US.
"AT FIRST, I WANTED NOTHING TO DO WITH CHRISTINA'S ADULTERY.
"BUT SHE HAD MANY LOVERS. EVEN ME.
"THE DOCTOR'S TESTS PROVED YOU WERE MINE AFTER ALL, LITTLE AMBER."



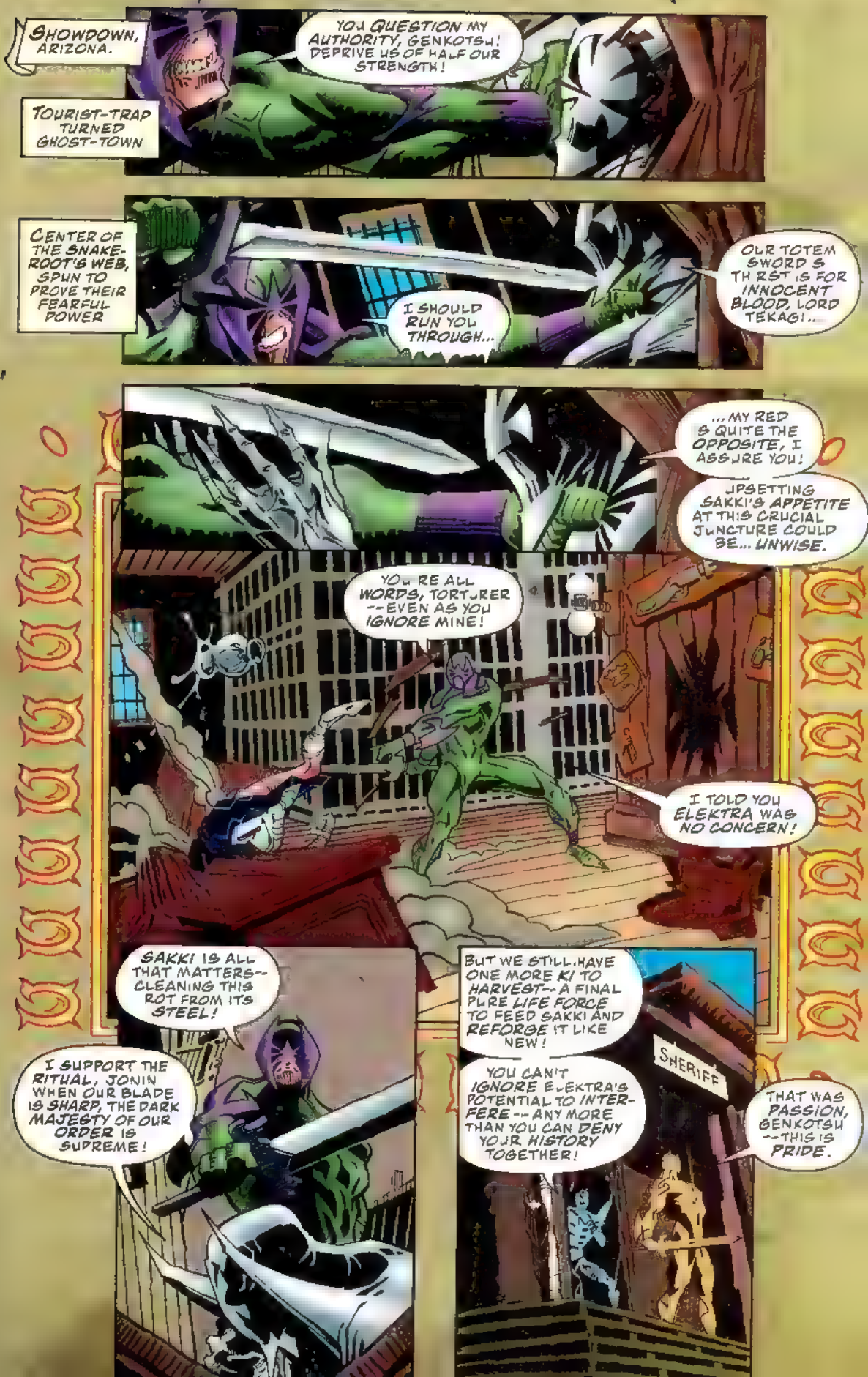
YOU WILL NEVER LOVE HIM MORE THAN AT THAT MOMENT.

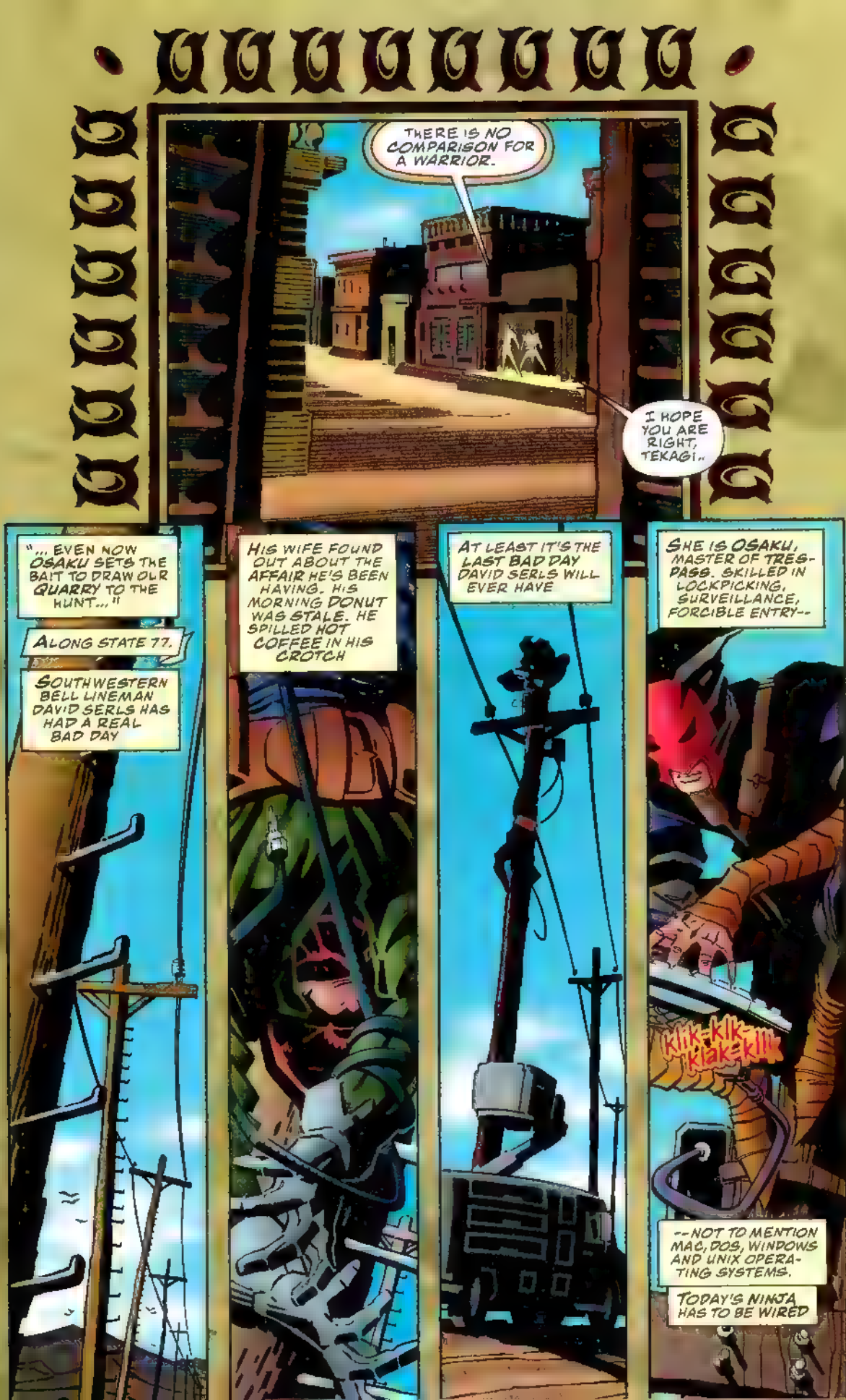


THE TIME IS NOW.
BENEATH A MOUNTAIN THAT SCRAPES AT THE HEAVENS.
IN A CAVE THAT ECHOES DOWN INTO THE ABYSS.
AN OLD AND TERRIBLE TRAINING GROUND FOR SHINOBI-NO-JUTSU.
NINJA. THE KILLERS OF THE NIGHT.
ELEKTRA HAS COME BACK HERE TO GIVE HERSELF OVER TO ADVERSITY.
HARDSHIP IS WHAT'S NEEDED TO SHARPEN HER EDGE.

AND SHE'LL NEED EVERY CRUEL ADVANTAGE TO SURVIVE THE SNAKEROOT.
HOW CAN WE BE SURE SHE'S HERE, DOKA?
DESPERATION, ENTEKI--THINKING SHE CAN RE-LEARN WHAT SHE'S LOST!
I DON'T LIKE IT--SHE COULD BE ANYWHERE!
LET'S JUST FIND HER, FINISH HER QUICK AND--
NO-NO-NO, FERUZE--SHE SUFFERS SLOOOWLY! SLICE AND TWIST AND BURN-BURN-BURN!
GENKOTSU SAID--
THE CHUNIN'S HALF A WORLD AWAY--

--AND WE'RE HERE, WITH ALL THE REMINDER WE NEED OF WHAT THAT WITCH HAS PUT US THROUGH AGAIN AND AGAIN!
WE RECOVER, YES... BUT EACH TIME COMING BACK IT'S A LITTLE WORSE! AND "A LITTLE" ADDS UP TO SOMETHING FIERCE, BROTHERS!
RESURRECTION IS A PRIVILEGE OF BEING SNAKEROOT-- BUT NOT NECESSARILY A PLEASURE!
MAKING THAT WHORE SCREAM, THOUGH ...THAT'LL BE A PLEASURE!
THE SNAKEROOT ARE RAW FEROCITY.
FACING THEM DIRECTLY IS ALMOST CERTAIN DESTRUCTION.
DEATH WOULD BE THE EASY WAY-OUT
AND DEATH IS NOW ELEKTRA'S BEST CHANCE FOR STAYING ALIVE.

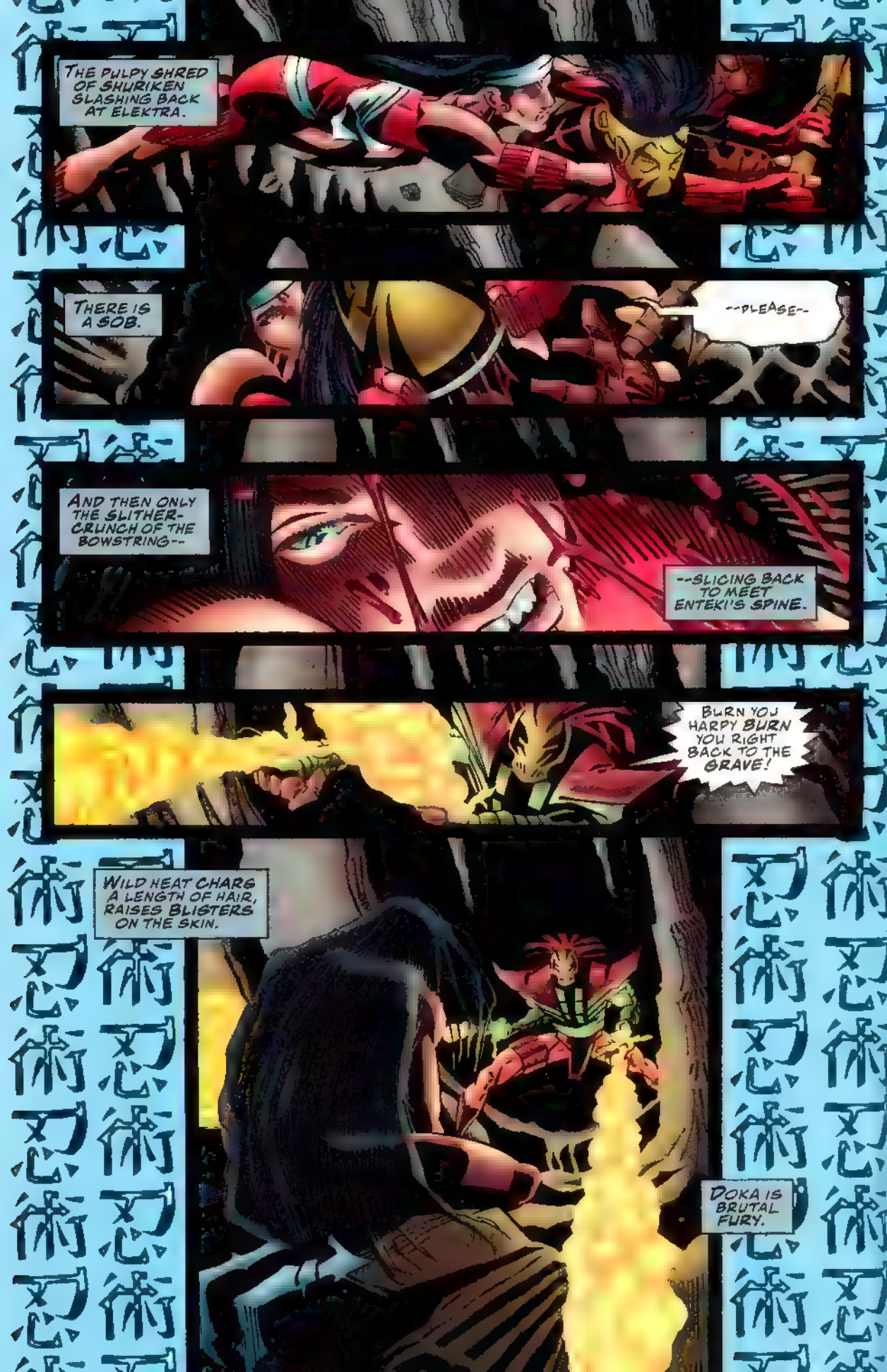

SHOWDOWN, ARIZONA.
TOURIST-TRAP TURNED GHOST-TOWN
YOU QUESTION MY AUTHORITY, GENKOTSU! DEPRIVE US OF HALF OUR STRENGTH!
CENTER OF THE SNAKE-ROOT'S WEB, SPUN TO PROVE THEIR FEARFUL POWER
I SHOULD RUN YOU THROUGH...
OUR TOTEM SWORD'S THIRST IS FOR INNOCENT BLOOD, LORD TEKAGI...
...MY RED'S QUITE THE OPPOSITE, I ASSURE YOU!
UPSETTING SAKKI'S APPETITE AT THIS CRUCIAL JUNCTURE COULD BE... UNWISE.
YOU'RE ALL WORDS, TORTURER --EVEN AS YOU IGNORE MINE!
I TOLD YOU ELEKTRA WAS NO CONCERN!
SAKKI IS ALL THAT MATTERS-- CLEANING THIS ROT FROM ITS STEEL!
I SUPPORT THE RITUAL, JONIN WHEN OUR BLADE IS SHARP, THE DARK MAJESTY OF OUR ORDER IS SUPREME!
BUT WE STILL HAVE ONE MORE KI TO HARVEST-- A FINAL PURE LIFE FORCE TO FEED SAKKI AND REFORGE IT LIKE NEW!
YOU CAN'T IGNORE ELEKTRA'S POTENTIAL TO INTERFERE -- ANY MORE THAN YOU CAN DENY YOUR HISTORY TOGETHER!
SHERIFF
THAT WAS PASSION, GENKOTSU --THIS IS PRIDE.


THERE IS NO COMPARISON FOR A WARRIOR.
I HOPE YOU ARE RIGHT, TEKAGI..
"... EVEN NOW OSAKU SETS THE BAIT TO DRAW OUR QUARRY TO THE HUNT..."
ALONG STATE 77.
SOUTHWESTERN BELL LINEMAN DAVID SERLS HAS HAD A REAL BAD DAY
HIS WIFE FOUND OUT ABOUT THE AFFAIR HE'S BEEN HAVING. HIS MORNING DONUT WAS STALE. HE SPILLED HOT COFFEE IN HIS CROTCH
AT LEAST IT'S THE LAST BAD DAY DAVID SERLS WILL EVER HAVE
SHE IS OSAKU, MASTER OF TRESPASS. SKILLED IN LOCKPICKING, SURVEILLANCE, FORCIBLE ENTRY--
klik-klk klak-klk
--NOT TO MENTION MAC, DOS, WINDOWS AND UNIX OPERATING SYSTEMS.
TODAY'S NINJA HAS TO BE WIRED

SAN CARLOS INDIAN RESERVATION. NAVAJO ACTION COMMITTEE.
GRASS-ROOTS-WHATEVER-IT-TAKES-LONG-HOURS COMMUNITY-MINDED GOODWILL.
YOU'LL WANT TO TAKE A LOOK AT THIS, SINGER--
--THAT "SHOWDOWN" PROPERTY YOU HAD YOUR EYE ON FOR THE TRIBE JUST CAME UP ON THE MARKET LISTINGS!
I THOUGHT IT WAS STILL TIED UP IN THE BACK TAX MESS!
LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE UNLOADING IT-- IN A HURRY, TOO, IF THIS PRICE IS RIGHT! VERY TEMPTING... BETTER MOVE IF YOU WANT IT!
GONNA JUMP ON THE CASINO BANDWAGON?
I WAS HOPING FOR SOMETHING MORE CULTURAL, JANEY...
...MAYBE A HISTORICAL THEME ATTRACTION!
HEY--SLOT MACHINES ARE A LITTLE KNOWN PART OF NAVAJO TRADITION!
I SUPPOSE I BETTER GET A LOOK AT THE SITE TOMORROW-- WE DON'T WANT TO MISS THIS!
WHERE'S THAT MAP? BANE OF MY EXISTENCE...
SINGER TSILKALI
EXEMPLARY SERVICE AWARD
YOU WANT ONE OF THOSE YELLOW HIGHLIGHTERS?
ME? I'D BE BETTER OFF WITH A TRAIL OF BREADCRUMBS...

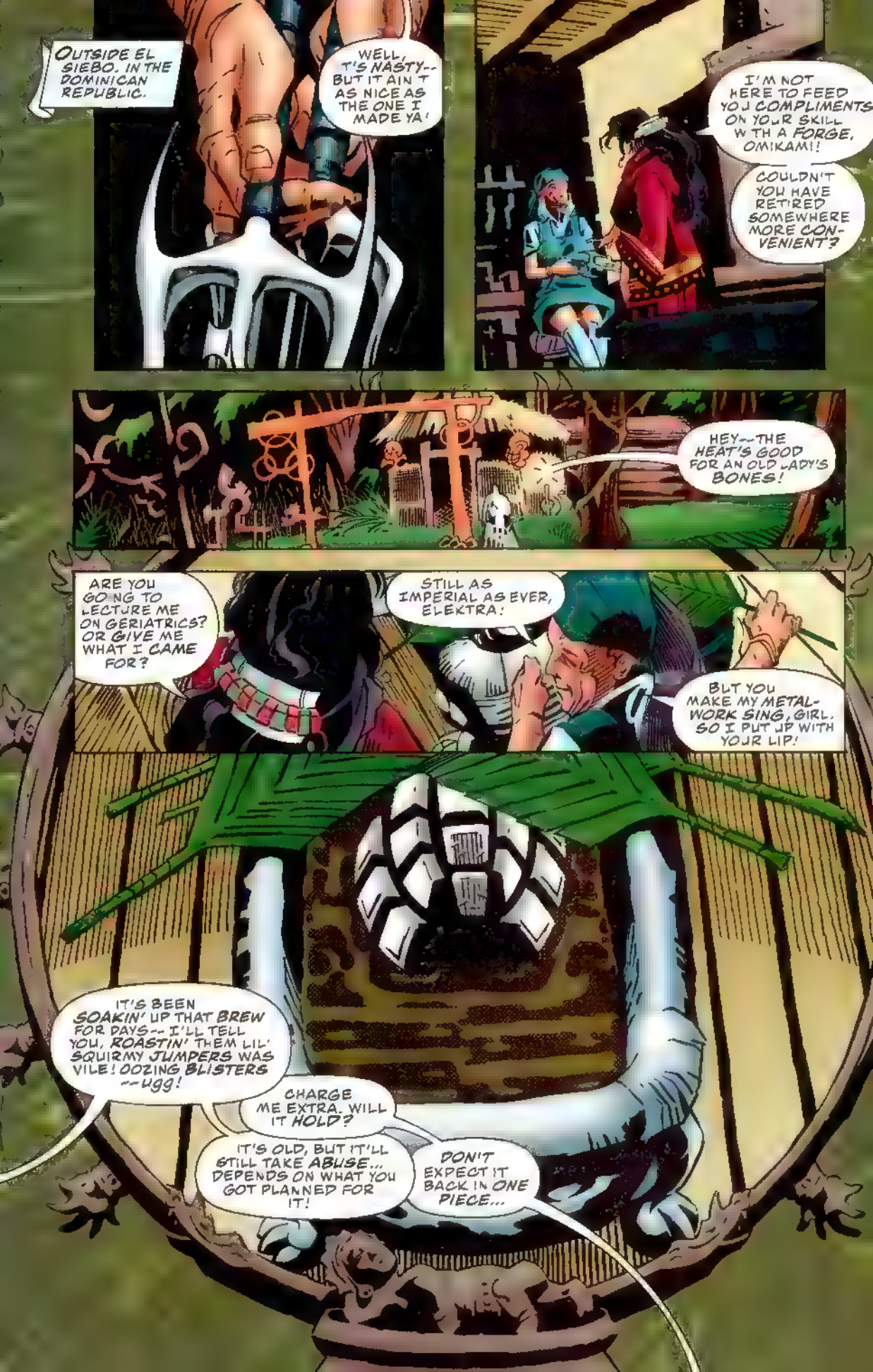
THE CAVE.
STONE, ROUGH-EDGED AND DANK.
BLOOD, STEAMING AS IT COOLS.
PATHETIC!
AND IGNORANT-- SEPPUKU IS A MAN'S WAY!
A KUNOICHI WHORE DESERVES ONLY THE SLASHED THROAT OF JIGAI!
STILL, RED IS RED!
MMMM... TASTY!

TRY SOME OF YOURS, FERUZE.
TWO OF A KIND...
IN THE DARKNESS, A SAVAGE FUGUE.
SOFT WHISPER OF WOODEN SHAFT ON LEATHER.
WET STACCATO OF METAL AND BONE
FRUK
FRUK
FRUK
RASPS OF BREATH, LABORING, DESPERATE.


THE PULPY SHRED OF SHURIKEN SLASHING BACK AT ELEKTRA.
THERE IS A SOB.
--PLEASE--
AND THEN ONLY THE SLITHER-CRUNCH OF THE BOWSTRING--
--SLICING BACK TO MEET ENTEKI'S SPINE.
BURN YOU HARPY BURN YOU RIGHT BACK TO THE GRAVE!
WILD HEAT CHARS A LENGTH OF HAIR, RAISES BLISTERS ON THE SKIN.
DOKA IS BRUTAL FURY.

ELEKTRA IS MERCILESS FOCUS.
FINGERS SCULPT A PATTERN OF KUJI-IN.
SHRAAK!
ENERGY CHANNELS WITH VICIOUS FORCE.
--BURN YOU BURN--
GLAAGK!
TRRLAK-OOM!
DEEP IN THE CAVE, IT GETS VERY COLD.
THE FURIES HELP KEEP ELEKTRA WARM.

SHOWDOWN.
THE STATUE WAS NEVER INTENDED TO HAVE MEANING.
AT MOST, IT WAS A STEREOTYPE SET IN PLASTER. CHEAP THRILLS FOR THE TOURIST TRADE.
BUT TEKAGI LOOKS BEYOND THE PITTED SURFACE. THE JONIN OF THE SNAKEROOT STUDIES THE FIGURE FOR WHAT IT REPRESENTS.
A WAY OF LIFE LONG NEGLECTED. FORGOTTEN CAST OFF OR OVERCOME BY A SOCIETY IN A RUSH TO BE "CIVILIZED."
IT IS ANOTHER OMEN DARE NOT IGNORED. ONE MORE WARNING OF WHAT LURKS AHEAD IF SAKKI'S HUNGER IS DENIED.
DEPRIVED OF THEIR SYMBOL, THE CLAN IS DEPRIVED OF THEIR STRENGTH.
IN THE WAY OF THE TRIBAL AND THE NINJA WARRIOR, TEKAGI SEES A DARK MIRROR.
AND DREADS A BURNING FLAME BECOME A FUNERAL PYRE.


OUTSIDE EL SIEBO. IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.
WELL, IT'S NASTY-- BUT IT AIN'T AS NICE AS THE ONE I MADE YA!
I'M NOT HERE TO FEED YOU COMPLIMENTS ON YOUR SKILL WITH A FORGE, OMIKAMI!
COULDN'T YOU HAVE RETIRED SOMEWHERE MORE CONVENIENT?
HEY--THE HEAT'S GOOD FOR AN OLD LADY'S BONES!
ARE YOU GOING TO LECTURE ME ON GERIATRICS? OR GIVE ME WHAT I CAME FOR?
STILL AS IMPERIAL AS EVER, ELEKTRA!
BUT YOU MAKE MY METAL-WORK SING, GIRL. SO I PUT UP WITH YOUR LIP!
IT'S BEEN SOAKIN' UP THAT BREW FOR DAYS-- I'LL TELL YOU, ROASTIN' THEM LIL' SQUIRMY JUMPERS WAS VILE! OOZING BLISTERS --ugg!
CHARGE ME EXTRA. WILL IT HOLD?
IT'S OLD, BUT IT'LL STILL TAKE ABUSE... DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU GOT PLANNED FOR IT!
DON'T EXPECT IT BACK IN ONE PIECE...

ARIZONA STATE 77.
OH, THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!
DON'T THEY KNOW PEOPLE LOOK AT THESE THINGS WHILE DRIVING? IT'S AN ACCIDENT WAITING TO HAPPEN...
...I'M SURE THERE'S A KICKBACK CONSPIRACY BETWEEN MAP MAKERS AND AUTO-BODY SHOPS!
GREAT. NOW WHAT?
HI... I'M KINDA RUNNING BEHIND
IS THIS GONNA TAKE LONG?
IT MIGHT.
YOU'VE GOT TROUBLE DOWN THE ROAD AHEAD...

OSAKU HAD EVERYTHING IN PLACE BY THE PHONE LINES, YES?
THE TRAP WAS WELL SET, JON N..
...AND SPRUNG, IT SEEMS! HERE COMES OSAKU NOW!
SHE UNDERSTOOD NOT TO HURT THE TSILKALI WOMAN?
THE GIVING OF PAIN IS A RIGHT WE ALL ENJOY, LORD!
BUT SHE KNOWS TO SAVE THE INNOCENT'S BLOOD FOR SAKKI
WHAT'S THAT FOOL OSAKU DOING COMING SO FAST?
THAT'S NOT OSAKU--
VRRKTTRRRR
--AND SHE'S NOT STOPPING!

GASOLINE SPILLS AND SPLATTERS
FWWSREEET
ZZRIIPK
METAL SPARKS METAL.
BRAKAKOOM!

VULTURES CIRCLE IN TO TASTE WHAT'S LEFT OF THE SNAKEROOT NAMED OSAKU.
SINGER TS!LKALI SLUMPS UNCONSCIOUS IN THE SHADE, LAID OUT WITH A FIRST AID KIT AND A NOTE OF EXPLANATION.
AND SHOWDOWN FINALLY HAS A CHANCE TO LIVE OUT ITS NAME.
M-MY LEGS--!
TEKAG!-- I--I C-CAN'T FIND MY LEGS...
THEN YOU DIE THERE IN THE DIRT

KYOTUTSU TEN KAN HO-- FALSEHOOD AS TRUTH! VERY TASTY!
MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN YOUR PREHISTORIC ARMOR!
AND I WORE IT SPECIAL, JUST FOR YOU, TEKAGI
I PREFER MORE CLEAVAGE FROM MY KUNOICHI
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THAT WORD.
"KUNOICHI"? BUT IT'S WHAT YOU ARE, ELEKTRA-- A WHORE!
FOR ALL YOUR TALK-- "CHECKING BRUTAL IMPULSES," "FINDING A FOCUS"--
--WHAT REALLY DRIVES YOU IS THE WANTON THRILL OF BREAKING FREE OF THE PEDESTRIAN!
YOU'VE SOLD YOURSELF TO THE EXTREME A HUNDRED DIFFERENT WAYS IN TWICE AS MANY POSITIONS--
--ALL TO BE SURE YOU'RE NEVER MISTAKEN AS ORDINARY! IT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE NOW-- WHORE!

IT WOULD TAKE ONE TO KNOW ONE, CHIGO.
CHIGO? YOU DARE--
YOUR EQUIPMENT'S DIFFERENT, BUT YOU'RE JUST AS MUCH A PROSTITUTE!
YOU'VE SOLD YOURSELF TO THAT BLADE--
FWOOK
--ALL THAT MATTERS IS SERVICING TS PLEASURE!
YOU'D BE SURPRISED, NATCHIOS--
--RIGHT NOW, BLEEDING YOU IS ALL ABOUT MAKING ME HAPPY!

There is nothing wasted as the Shinobi tear into each other
TWROOK!
No pointless verbal spar
No breath not absolutely essential.
No weapon drawn back to send an accidental warning.
No hesitation in the strike.
There is the Mai-ai of distancing.
The erratic-confounding movement of the Yoko Aruki and Nuki Ashi steps.
KRAAK!

THERE IS A HUNGRY ROAR OF FLAME
AND THE MOIST HISS OF THICK LEATHER SLICING THROUGH.
FINGERS GROW NUMB UNDER SLICK LAYERS OF GORE--
--AND OILY FLECKS OF SHREDDED ARMOR.
A NEW SCAR--
--TO REMIND ME --OF AN OLD LOVER!
YOU'RE GOING TO WISH-- YOU NEVER KNEW ME--

DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF
MUSCLES BURN UNDER THE ONSLAUGHT.
SHWTOOM
SHWTOOM
SANITY SCREAMS A WARNING.
SHWTOOM

SO MUCH --FOR YOUR "PROTECTION."
FOR OLD TIMES--I'LL ADMIT--YOU HAD ME GOING--
--hryaak--
--EVEN FEELING--A LITTLE WINDED!
BUT YOU CHOOSE--A POOR ALLY.
THAT ARMOR--WET WITH ROT!
NO. DRENCHED... IN RANA AND DENDROBATES.
TREE-FROG VENOM...?
NO THREAT--ON THE SKIN.
BUT... OPEN--WOUNDS--!
YOU POISONED ME?! ME?! YOU GOD DAMN--

NINJA.
EXOTIC TOXINS SLOW THE SNAKEROOT'S REFLEXES.
THE WORD YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS NINJA.
A TANGLE OF NERVES DOWN HIS BACK RENDS APART WITH A MEWLING, GRISTLY SHRIEK.
MOTOR CONTROL BECOMES A WRETCHED MOCKERY OF HUMAN MOTION.
YOU'RE LYING, YOU-- YOU'D NEVER-- VENOM-- IT'D KILL YOU, TOO!
THE FIRST LESSON, TEKAGI.
FORGET ALL BUT WHAT YOU DO.
WHEN YOU-- CONSIDER YOURSELF-- DEAD ALREADY--

--THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR--
--NOTHING TO STOP YOU!
NO--ELEKTRA! BAKKI--ONLY INNOCENT BLOOD--
HAVE NO FEAR.

SHE TARGETS THE ATEMI POINTS.
THE CRUCIAL JUNCTIONS OF BLOOD FLOW AND ELECTRICAL CURRENT.
TEKAGI'S KI--THE ESSENCE OF LIFE.
SOMEWHERE NEAR, A CROW CRIES OUT SHI.
FOUR TIMES.
THE NUMBER OF DEATH.
AND THE SOUND OF ITS CALL ECHOES FOR ELEKTRA.

You are timeless and trapped between worlds.
Tekagi burns with a heat that blisters your skin.
You steel yourself against the pain and struggle to lessen his agony.
There's nothing left of your adversary...
...but beneath the char...
...a vestige of the man he was.
You never loved him, not like Matt.
But you and Tekagi shared a moment--
--your bodies, and at least a murmur of your souls.
The life you've chosen is hard and cold.
And any touch of warmth remains a gift.
Timeless, and trapped between worlds.

SINGER TSILKALI READS THE NOTE, AND BRINGS THE ANTIDOTE ELEKTRA LEFT BEHIND IN THE SHADE.
I WOULD'VE BEEN QUICKER, BUT...I'M NOT VERY GOOD WITH MAPS!
IT'S QUICK ENOUGH.
THE RAVAGES TO THE BODY LAST A LONG TIME.
RECOVERY IS BEST SERVED NEAR TO SOMETHING LIKE HOME.
HUGO MATTHEWS LOVING FATHER
REMEMBER THIS, FATHER?
"LITTLE AMBER"?
WAS TEKAGI RIGHT? I SUPPOSE... MAYBE HE WAS.
IT IS ALL ABOUT BEING MORE THAN AVERAGE. SO VERY SPECIAL.
BECAUSE... BECAUSE THAT'S HOW YOU ALWAYS MADE ME FEEL...
THE SETTING GREEK SUN SEEMS TO CATCH IN THE AMBER.
AND SPARKS INTO THE GROWING NIGHT.

ELEKTRA CREATED BY FRANK MILLER

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